THE OGDEN STANDARD

WHY THE ALOOFNESS OF NEW YORK?

An Observant Provincial, Speaking for Millions of Others, Tells How They Regard the Metropolis—Also How the Metropolis Views Yap, Who, After All, Has a Big Advantage

Mrs. Josiah Soandso from Kenosha

FOR the purposes of many persons a proper map of the United States would show a large black dot on the Atlantic coast labelled "New York," and for the rest a huge blank space marked "Great American Desert."

Geographical maps, topographical maps and many other kinds of graphical maps illustrate mountains, rivers, watersheds, towns, cities and other features of interest to scientists, with each State displayed in red, green or some other fancy color, but a sociographical map would show the Island of Manhattan in a deep crimson, fading off into pink and faint rose to include everything as far as New Rochelle and the near half of Long Island, while the remainder of the United States would wear simply some unitone, preferably a dull gray or a colorless khaki.

New Yorkers—not meaning a few brave, adventurous spirits, but the average man, as you would reach out and touch him on the streets—regard the rest of the United States much as the early Spanish explorers regarded America in general, simply as a place to go out and get gold, to spend, on return, in the mother country.

Provincials, on the other hand (and as this is written by one of them no offence is meant in the title), regard New York as a place in which to spend money; to look open eyed at Vanity Fair from a seat in the gallery, or as one in which they may wear stylish clothes without attracting undue attention.

This grand division of population into New Yorkers and others is a condition which has a parallel in no other country in the world, except perhaps in France, where they have Parisians and others. In England the prevalence of great country estates and the relics of the feudal system, the abundance of country families which were reigning before London was thought of, preclude any possibility of such a condition; while in the other countries historical conditions and the limited area of the whole territory have made it possible for the leaven of the great city to permeate the whole nation much more than it has ever done in the few years and the vast area of the United States.

What a sight it would be if some day there should sound on Manhattan a sort of trumpet of Judgment Day—blown, one might fancy, by the Lady of Liberty out in the harbor—commanding the sheep and goats to separate, the New Yorkers on one side of the line and the outsiders on the other! What, for instance, would be the proportion of numbers if such a trumpet should sound on a Saturday night during the theatre season? And what surprises such a call would unfold!

The New Yorker would find that the grotesque character at whom he had been laughing as a typical "rube" would take his place beside him, having been born in the shadow of the elevated and having never been west of the Hudson. The provincial would find that the elegant lady whom he had been admiring in the restaurant as one of the fabled Four Hundred was none other than Mrs. Josiah Soandso, from Kenosha.

And the way in which they eye each other, these sheep and goats! For no patriotic Hungarian ever regarded with deeper suspicion a Philistine German-Austrian than does the average New Yorker regard the man or woman from outside the pale.

New York in War.

In the summer of 1909 the United States government threw some 15,000 young men of various States into two heterogeneous masses for the attack and defence of Boston. On the surface they were the citizen soldiery of four States and the District of Columbia, all armed, equipped, directed and trained exactly alike, under the unifying process of the modern organized militia. At heart they were young men of every class, from banker to hostler, each representative of the State from which he came.

For eight days these young men on both sides of the mimic war marched, fought, lived and, as the issue proved, suffered together. And to a close observer there evolved one of the most interesting points on this very question which is being discussed.

Inside of a day the men of New Jersey, Connecticut and the District of Columbia were fraternizing together like brothers. The minute peace was declared they were over the line exchanging tobacco and canteen drinks with the "enemy" from Massachusetts.

And, alone in all this feasting and rejoicing, stood the camps of the New York city battalions, as closely marked as if they were hostile, in dignified aloofness from all the others. Lean, gaunt Yankees from Connecticut, jovial troopers from New Jersey and even grinning negroes from the District of Columbia were hailing each other in the streets of Hanover Four Corners like brothers in arms, passing in and out of one another's camps, exchanging tokens of the campaign, while behind the picket lines of the New Yorkers the city soldiers stared and glared in strange aloofness, and no Yank or bean eater ever unbidden crossed the line.

An officer of those days says that in the week's campaign he made firm friends with men from every other State, but not once did he speak to a New Yorker except on a single occasion when he had business at the camp of a New York battery and asked his way, to be met by exactly that same suspicious stare that the provincial gets when he asks his way in the streets of New York.

The New York regiments were perfect models of neatness and discipline, their officers were the best looking in the streets of the towns, but at admiration all intercourse stopped. On the second day out there was almost a fight when a detachment of the Second Connecticut infantry, acting as a provost guard, arrested a man from the Twenty-second New York who was trying to pass the lines without a pass.

The same feeling comes to the provincial in civilian life, felt most acutely on every visit to New York. For the odd part of it is that every visitor has a guilty feeling that the grim hostility of the great city is directed entirely against his little self. In all the bustle and gayety of the place he feels as if he were the one outsider, as if the whole city might rise at any moment and demand, with a glare, how he had dared to intrude.

Take the case of a sample man—from a city well outside of New York, far enough away so that his business does not make him familiar with the place and yet not so far that a trip to New York assumes the aspect of a two days' journey. He arrives in the city probably on Saturday afternoon—for a week's end is a great trip for the provincial, and on that very day when the New Yorkers are pouring out the provincials are pouring in. Let the visitor be a man of well to do circumstances, a man of culture and education, possibly familiar with Paris and the cities of Europe, but yet a stranger in his own city of New York.

Mr. Provincial's Experiences.

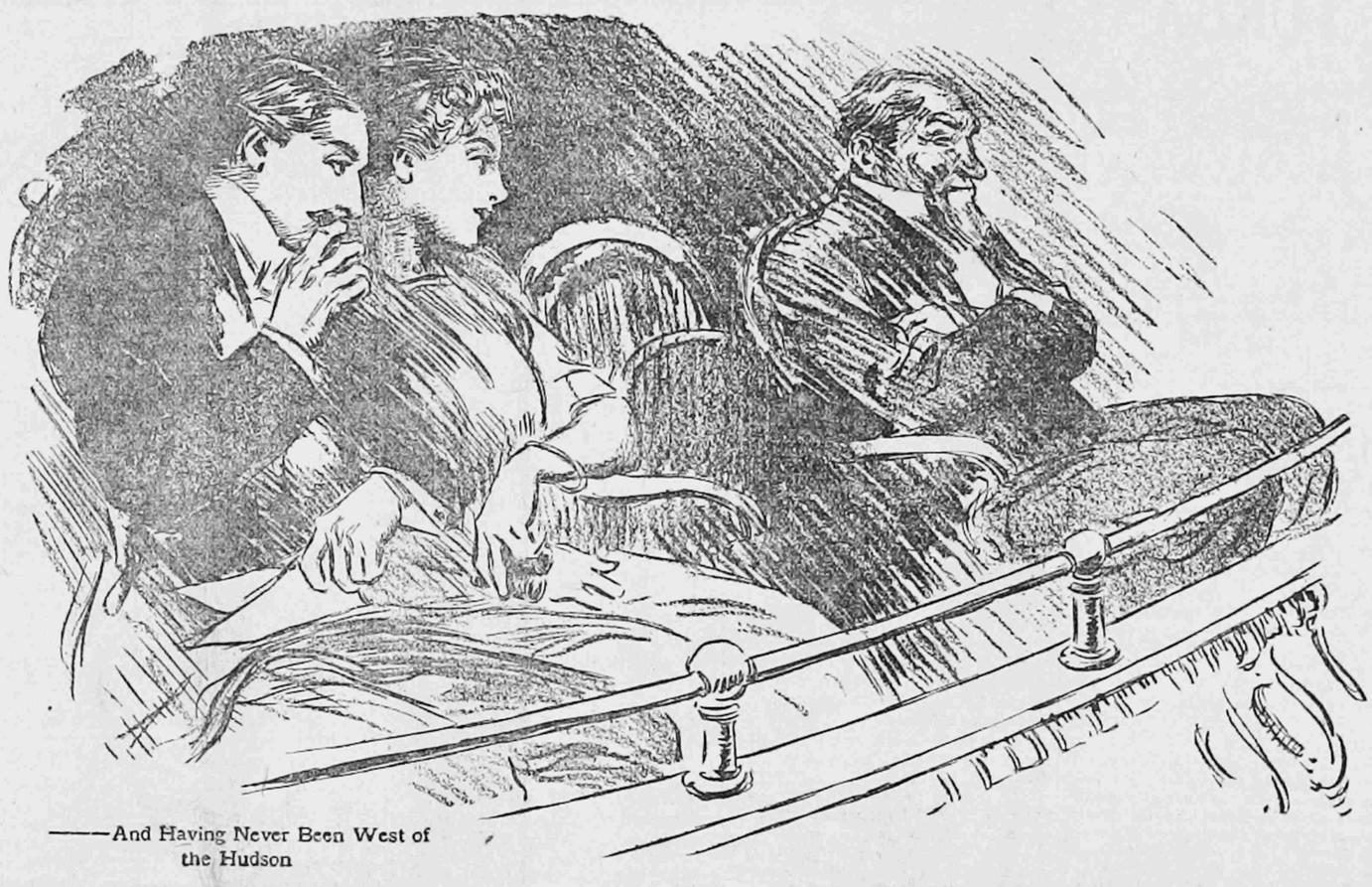
He arrives with a recommendation of a hotel, given him by some friend who has added exact directions for getting there, has possibly drawn a little map on the back of an envelope. At the very station the fear of the city begins to creep over him. Other passengers are tearing in a great rush for the gates; every one seems to know just where to go except himself; and finally, in the blankness of despair, he throws the map to the winds and drops into the clutches of the nearest cabman, the great maze of the city, which had seemed so simple on the map, becoming a hopeless jungle to him. Of course he neglects to go to the station cab office and hires a shouting Jehu, who charges him two or three times the legitimate fare, which he pays as a willing penalty for his own ignorance.

He arrives at the hotel a beaten man and takes any room offered him by the clerk, who appears to be the best dressed and most sophisticated young man whom he has ever seen. Heavens, if he could only know that this same clerk came from his own State and had been in New York less than a year! But he never will know. That is, the clerk will never tell him.

At this most hopeless minute of his life our visitor, if he is experienced in landing in strange places in the depressing hour of twilight, will do a very sensible thing. He will go to his room, shave, bathe and make a complete change. If the symptoms continue he should order a cup of coffee and read a few short stories from the magazine which he has bought on the train. If he is a drinking man he may follow his instincts, but the best authorities do not advise this. It savors too much of despair.

At dinner the world will become rosy once more, for "breathes there a man with soul so dead," &c. The first thing to strike the visitor will be the music in the dining room, and under its subtle strains he will realize without fail that he was made for city life and will wonder why he does not come to New York every week or two.

The men and women in evening clothes and the marvellous beauty of some of the red cheeks will also strike him, and he will wonder what is "going on" that night. The only flaw in his cup of bliss will be the gnawing perplexity as to whether he ought to tip the waiter before or after he is served. He has heard so much about the evils of the tipping system that it will be a distinct surprise when the head waiter fails to grab him by the throat as he leaves the room and demand a dollar bill. Being a well meaning provincial he will probably give the waiter the largest tip he has received that evening and will be quite surprised at the creature's open gratitude.



——And Having Never Been West of the Hudson

Little Old Milwaukee Is Good Enough for Me

Well fed and smoking a cigar almost as good as that supplied him by his honest little cigar dealer at home, he will stroll into the foyer with the admirable intention of "seeing a show." He may even ask some minor employe, like a bellboy or a chambermaid, what is "in town" that night. The fact that the employe knows less about it than he does will be the basis for surprise No. 2. His unconscious belief had been that the entire city of New York attended the theatres en masse every night in the week. If he only knew what bliss he could bring to the heart of the bellboy by giving him the price of the peanut gallery for the first time in six months where would charity cease?

The Queer Effect.

Having now a place where he may eat and sleep, the visitor again views the world in a normal light and strolls out with confidence unalloyed. At first glance there is something queer about the atmosphere of the hurrying streets which he does not quite understand. One provincial who has had the feeling often enough to analyze it explains that it is the lack of people stopping to greet each other, to cluster on street corners and in front of saloons, as they do at home.

With plenty of time to find his way Mr. Provincial will get along swimmingly, especially if he discovers early in the game that because Broadway is east of Sixth avenue in some places it does not follow that it occupies the same relative position all the way up town. The visitor will probably make good his resolve to "see a show," and alas, alack! ten to one it will not be "The Old Homestead," but a musical comedy of the sprightliest kind.

At the theatre he will discover with surprise how exceedingly simple it is to get to his seat and will also note, with some disappointment, that the house is no larger than the opera house at home. He had a preconceived notion that all New York theatres were built on the principle of the Hippodrome, and even that, sorrowful to relate, is not as big as the State armory in our town. Some metropolitan manager should build a house with an orchestra exactly one mile long as a special upholder of provincial ideals.

The metropolitan feeling will come back, however, once the visitor gets into the lighted streets. Being of an adventurous disposition, he will not return to his own hotel, but will seek some good cafe.

Here the eager spring of the waiters to show him a table will restore his feeling of self-importance, and, like as not, he will settle back, saying to himself, "Ah, it's good to be in little old New York again!"

He will then watch the incoming customers with eager eyes, painting the most glorious romances about them. Those women, gorgeous with jewels, regal in their low cut gowns, who can they be? he wonders. He envies the careless grace with which their escorts chat with them. Their talk must be the brilliant repartee that one reads in the novels, with snatches about horses and hounds and country houses. That stout woman, who chaperons, is undoubtedly one of the famous hostesses of the metropolis. Lucky is he that he is not near enough to hear what she is actually saying:—

"Well, I told George that if we came to New York it would be the last time. Little old Milwaukee is good enough for me."

Then that slim man with the silk hat and the bored air—a real New Yorker this time. Another leader of society—what a devil of a fellow he must be! But our friend from Homeville does not see the contemptuous glances of the waiters which follow the man as he glances idly from side to side, looking, as Mr. Provincial supposes, for some acquaintance with whom to lighten the ennui of an hour. The waiters know that he is looking for some good natured soul on whom he can graft the price of a supper and the drinks.

It is possible that one chance in a million will fall and that, in the stream of faces, our friend will see that of a fellow townsman. From the present point of view it is the most unfortunate thing that he could do, for, though they had but a bowing acquaintance at home, they would fall on each other's necks and the whole fruits of an evening's training would be lost. For when two people from Homeville fall together the atmosphere ceases to be New York and for all practical purposes they might as well be back on the corner of Main street and Homeville square.

All Days Alike.

The first day is a fair sample of all that are to follow. When he sums it all up, afterward, Mr. Provincial finds that he has done but three things—walk the streets aimlessly, watch the people and pour money into the cavernous pockets of the hotel and theatre proprietors. After a while he gets so that, in his morning walks, he can tell Fifth avenue without looking up at the lamp posts. He even sees people stranger to New York than he is and smiles with a quiet air of superiority.

On the second night he finds, to his surprise, that he has dropped into the same café as on the first night, and is rather proud of the fact that the waiters recognize him. He had had an idea that he would eat in a different place every evening, but habit, the strongest force in human nature, gets the better of him and he has soon marked out a tiny section of New York which is all his own. When he has done that he has taken the first step toward becoming a naturalized New Yorker; yet somehow he had never realized before that all New Yorkers do not live all over the city at once.

And now for the provincial, in the eyes of the average New Yorker. It can be expressed in one word, "Yap." This does not refer, of course, to the viewpoint of the New Yorker who has been educated outside of the city or who is constantly on the move in all parts of the country, but to the man and woman of the streets and restaurants. The Yap may own the very apartment in which the New Yorker lives, but as long as he continues to vote and buy his hosiery in Nashua the epithet is still applied to him. As one goes up the social scale the diction is finer, but the sentiment remains the same.

"She is a girl from out of town," says the young lady in society, referring to a friend who has been seen with her. The friend may come from Detroit or from Pensacola, but that makes no difference. The fact that she is "out of town" is the vital point of the statement.

The Yaps have a good deal to say about this. George Washington was a Yap and Abraham Lincoln was from "out of town." So has been every President of the United States, with one exception. Jack Johnson is an honored Yap and so are most of the heroes of the national league, but instances have no appeal to the New Yorker.

It is about an even deal. The New Yorker continues to scoff and the provincial, when he reaches home, smiles safely from the satisfaction of honest food, good air and a friendly neighborhood. And the Yap has this big advantage, that, while New York is a mighty little place, after all, there is a good deal to the rest of the American continent.